

# Fightback

*Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism*



## THE PASEFIKA ISSUE

SPECIAL EDITION  
NZD \$5

# Fightback 10-Point Programme

Fightback stands for the following core programme, and for building institutions of grassroots power in the working class and oppressed groups to bring them about:

- 1. Constitutional transformation** based on Tino Rangatiratanga, Mana Motuhake and workers power. Tangata whenua and community co-ops to operate as kaitiaki over public resources.
- 2. Secure, appropriate and meaningful work** for those who want it, with a shorter working week. The benefit system to be replaced with a Universal Basic Income.
- 3. International working class solidarity.** Open borders, full rights for migrant workers. Recognition of Pasifika rights to self-determination. Opposition to all imperialist intervention and alliances, including New Zealand state's participation in military occupations, 'free trade' agreements and surveillance agreements.
- 4. No revolution without women's liberation.** Full funding for appropriate, community-driven abuse prevention and survivor support, free access to all reproductive technologies, public responsibility for childcare and other reproductive work. The right to full, safe expression of sexuality and gender identity.
- 5. An ecosocialist solution to climate change.** End fossil fuel extraction, expand green technology and public transport, and radically restructure industrial food production.
- 6. Freedom of information.** End corporate copyright policies in favour of creative commons. Public support for all media technologies, expansion of affordable broadband internet to the whole country. An end to government spying.
- 7. Abolish prisons,** replace with restorative justice and rehabilitation.
- 8. Universal right to housing.** Expansion of high-density, high-quality public housing, strict price controls on privately owned houses. Targeted support to end involuntary homelessness.
- 9. Fully-funded healthcare at every level.** Move towards health system based on informed consent, remove inequities in accident compensation, opposition to "top-down" efforts to change working people's behaviour.
- 10. Fully-funded education at every level,** run by staff and students. Funding for all forms of education and research, enshrining kaupapa Maori approaches.

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# Editorial

Tena koutou, Talofa lava

O lo'u ingoa o Leilani Angela Visesio.

O lo'u tina o Antonina Sasafala Visesio.

O le tina o lo'u tina o Vitolia Tomaniko Fa'atili, e sau mai le nu'u o Matatufu, Upolu.

Afio mai le ali'i o aiga

Afio mai le uso ali'i

Afio mai le matua ia Tapu

Afio mai alala maota

Mamalu ile falefa o Salepaga ma le Ituala

O le tama o lo'u tina o Visesio Ioane I'iga, e sau mai le nu'u o Lano, Savai'i.

Afio mai le Falefa o Alo o Sa Vui,

Vui Umumalu, Vui Tafilipepe, Vui Seigafolava, Vui Alafouina.

Susu mai lau susuga I'iga o le Maopu

Afio maia lau afioga Falenaoti

Afio alo o Va'afusuaga- Lutu ma Ape ma lau susuga Su' a.

Maliu mai lau fetalaga Malaeulu le Matua Fatalai

Maliu mai Salemuliaga, o le faleupolu o

Muamua lava ou te fia fa'afetai Fightback mo le fausaga opea, aemaise Ian Anderson.

O lona lua, ou te fia fa'afetai i latou uma oe na fesoasoani i le lomiga o le Pasefika mo latou loto, mafaufau, upu lototele ma galuega.

Lona tolu, Kassie Hartendorp mo lou lagolago le maluelue ma fautuaga.

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mo Aganu'u Samoa ma i lo'u tuafafine Samoa Liz Ah-Hi, Savali Andrews, Emma Josephine Koko,

Tina Setefano ma Sia To'omaga.

Fa'afetai lava mo le avanoa.

*Leilani Visesio*

Editor

# Decolonisation unplugged: my meeting with West Papuans in Indonesia

by Shasha Ali

This article is not easy to write. We live in a world with less than 8% of the global wealth distributed amongst the poorest, with indigenous women and children being predominant victim statistics of violent crimes and the impending crisis of climate change in the Pacific. Specifically for us in a post-TPPA signed Aotearoa New Zealand, it is clear that more than ever New Zealand as administered by the current Key government, is facing our own backyard crises from the most basic rights to clean water and shelter to widening income, access and opportunity disparities by gender, class and race.

## So why should we care about West Papua?

This question resounded in my head when a rather random Facebook faceless-profile person from an Auckland-based Indonesian student cultural group messaged me during my shared postings of the West Papua campaign. They were calling for peaceful demonstrations and observances to commemorate the Broken Promise of 15 August 1962, when the United Nations administered Dutch colonialists to hand over West Papua to Indonesia. The controversy remained as to whether a democratic voting process was fairly held, with the Indonesian government claiming they did things fair and square, and a huge proportion of West Papuans who claim otherwise.

**“You’re not even of Indonesian nationality,” this troll says to me in Bahasa. “ Why do you care so much about West Papua?”**

Okay, obviously sophisticated notions of diaspora and cultural identity is not to be discussed here. In many activist spaces I can talk about identity from a longer memory, my longer Java-Malay tribal origins across Madura and Bandung whakapapa, my subjectivity as a tauwi person in Aotearoa, and as an indigenous person deprived of her own indigeneity in her birth country of Singapura. However, that kind of talk will fall on deaf ears to people like this, because as long as I wasn’t born in Indonesia, apparently I’m not Indonesian enough to speak with any authority about Indonesia.

I try talking to him instead about Dutch colonialism, and how we can view Indonesia’s occupation of West Papua as a version of imperialism perpetrated by Indonesia. “Isn’t it enough that our forefathers and foremothers had to go through that? All the heroes we lost in the revolution for independence? Shouldn’t we try to make peace?” I typed out, attempting the most diplomatic version of my usually impatient, radical self.

Interestingly, the conversation halted. In the larger Facebook group where this thread began, 32 comments emerged very respectfully posted by a mix of Indonesian youth and mature postgraduate students in response to my call for solidarity for West Papua. There is consensus that this topic is a “very sensitive” issue, and that Indonesians would “kindly request” that I post instead a “legitimate mainstream media article” covering the situation on West Papua such as the Jakarta Post, as alternative and social media sources are “unreliable”.

**“Isn’t it enough that our forefathers and foremothers had to go through that? All the heroes we lost in the revolution for independence? Shouldn’t we try to make peace?” I typed out, attempting the most diplomatic version of my usually impatient, radical self.**

At this point, I do not think it would make any difference for me to tell these 32 online commenters that when I was in Yogyakarta two weeks ago, I actually met with a young West Papuan who witnessed his uncle killed by the Indonesian military, and whose footage of his uncle being beheaded is in the end minutes of film, *Run It Straight*. If the words and accounts of those who survive are not 'legitimate', then how exactly are we to dialogue further beyond the mediated catchphrase to 'agree to disagree'.

It is promising to remember however that while I was in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, there were actual Indonesian activists, from Muslims, LGBTQ, women's rights and human rights advocates who care and work in solidarity with West Papua freedom movements. You see, Yogyakarta has a very interesting and special history of being a state for thinkers, artists, academics and creatives of all kinds - from the traditional artisan to the contemporary. You can witness the city unravelling itself with its political graffiti art and tagging amidst short dwellings and rickshaw traffic, a type of punk attitude to life and society at large. The demographic is fairly youth-dominated with a huge student population and it is known to be historically the breeding ground for many famous artists, activists and left-leaning politicians.

But apparently 2016 is the year things started to look less than cool in Yogyakarta. I spent four days on a visitor internship at this non-profit social and environmental justice group called Engagimedia who told me they could not disclose their physical address to increase security, since the Police attacks on LGBTQ groups and West Papuans whom they support. I am so grateful to this organisation for without their support, none of what I am about to share here would have happened. It started with a small morning tea for me to meet with the West Papuan student activists that were caught in the Police arrests in the city prior to my arrival.

That morning tea became an entire day spent until the late hours of evening! I met three young men, and two of their friends who somehow couldn't make it (but were constantly on the phone saying they are on their way) to the office. Interestingly, they are more fluent in Bahasa Melayu (my first native tongue) than Bahasa Indonesia (the national language of Indonesia), and for a moment I felt immersed in a strange world of seeing them alike to my cousins.

We watched the film "Run It Straight" directed by Tere Harrison, as a resourceful opening to introduce myself as an activist from Aotearoa New Zealand. Of course, luckily the Engagimedia facilitator realised that there was no subtitles so between her super-Bahasa skills and my average-Kiwinglish skills she amazingly translated and subtitled the entire film on their platform prior to the morning tea session!

I presented to them a 'kia kaha' pack of vegan-friendly peanut butter cookies, the tacky "New Zealand breakfast" tea set, music commemorating October 15th Raids in Aotearoa, and some West Papua Action Auckland-made stickers and flyers. They greeted me back with honour, "Wah Wah Wah" and video'ed the entire moment like it was to become history.

"when I was in Yogyakarta two weeks ago, I actually met with a young West Papuan who WITNESSED his uncle killed by the Indonesian military, and whose footage of his uncle being BEHEADED is in the end minutes of film, *Run It Straight*. If the words and accounts of those who survive are not 'legitimate', then how exactly are we to dialogue further beyond the mediated catchphrase to 'agree to disagree'."

Our conversations were very fluid. These young men, postgraduate students in International Studies, Broadcasting and one doing a course in Agriculture, were highly competent in video advocacy and started showing me their footage from the demo, including how the Police arrested their fellow member Obby who was released on conditions, during the time of our meeting. “What exactly did Obby do that singled him out?” asked the Engagimedia group facilitator. The young men shook their head and said, “Same thing that we did - just walking to our campus.”

**I watched how the Police pushed and tightened their hold on Obby, who was unarmed and was not resisting the arrest.**

Several people with cameras and mobile phones recorded the entire proceeding from different angles. Later I was told that two of the journalists there who were Indonesian, were also arrested.

We needed to make sense of this entire madness, and it was hopeful to know that these young activists are aware that this is only one of the many challenges they need to get used to if they were to continue their struggle for freedom and Independence for West Papua. I have to admit, it was so energizing to hear this. My heart fell so hard just thinking about the atrocities their families and relatives are facing back in West Papua land, while they are faced with racial abuse slurs, being called “monkeys”, “dogs” and “blacks”. However the worst derogatory remark they are currently trying to campaign against, is being called separatists.

“This is the new dirty word by Indonesian religious extremists and attackers,” says one of the activists Johnny. “This is the dangerous word that makes us look like we are trying to stir up trouble.”

While I listen to their stories, I interrupted and asked where the Papuan women at. The boys said, no no, they are part of the movement, there are quite a few of them, and Johnny suddenly remembered he forgot to ask two of them to come to this meeting, and started calling someone named Maria. Myself and the Engagimedia facilitator (both of us cis women) laughed at their sudden panic to remedy the situation.

Towards the end of the meeting, we finally got to meet Maria. She was quiet, shy and reserved at first and also tired, as she rushed to the meeting straight after work at a local cafe. I asked her what she was studying: English Literature, she responded. I felt so happy to hear of this, and she started telling me about her hopes to become a teacher and her passion for environmental issues as her hometown, a seaside village in West Papua has been deforested for palm oil industrialisation.

And then she told me, “You know when I was in West Papua, I was told I am Malay.” I was confused. “What do you mean?”

“We have been brainwashed since birth to think we are Malay peoples, like Malaysians, like..”

“Like me?” I smiled.

“Yes,” she smiled back.

“It was only when I went to college here, that someone said you are West Papuan, that I suddenly realise, oh my god, I am West Papuan?”

That revelation to her, was heartbreaking for me to hear too. It brought me back to my own self-awakening, the memory-realisation that I am indigenous too, something I only truly confidently asserted, after being exposed to Te Tiriti history and tino rangatiratanga movements in Aotearoa New Zealand.

**I suppose in many ways, we are a family.** An Asia-Pacific networked family of indigenous peoples in their own right. But in any family, our differences mark how we relate to each other and how we grow into our own being. We are brown, we share Austronesian roots, yes. That is a great source of potential for solidarity but it should not form zealousness to override our role as supporters for each other's diverse histories, cultures and unique processes for self-determination. I think this is the bit that makes certain people forget why West Papua rightfully deserves their Independence from Indonesia. I also think this is why finding solutions for the West Papua-Indonesia divide, needs to emerge from a framework of restorative justice of sorts - this is about two colonized peoples, hurting socially, economically, politically and spiritually, through a long history of Western colonialism-white capitalism. The dialogue needs to be deeper than a black-and-white analysis of decolonisation that we are so used to applying, when situated in western settler nation-states like New Zealand.

We continue to bond, all of them keen to know more about Māori activism in New Zealand, and the other young men joined us to discuss future projects and activist solidarity actions that we can plan together on. Advocacy was a priority, and Engagimedia also informed of the funding challenges they face with international agencies. "Nobody wants to fund projects on West Papua," the facilitator said. "They don't mind Indonesia human rights stuff... but West Papua... no money..." she said, disheartened but hopeful that we should find a way to keep going and support these grassroots activists to organise their advocacy work sustainably with their own organisational status.

We exchanged contact details, had some food, took photos and promised to keep in touch, adding each other on Facebook instantly.

One of the key ideas we left with, was setting up a youth/artist exchange programme where West Papuans can visit New Zealand and New Zealand indigenous youth can visit West Papua, to share experiences, build knowledge and explore strategies for movement/community building. Yes, the thought may already cause alarm bells about security risks for all, but we will need to look at ways to make this happen if this is what it takes to support their self-determination process. We imagine it will be a long term Asia-Pacific programme that will need the crucial involvement of the Pacific community. We can begin with awareness raising in our own home countries, increasing the profile of campaigning across all sections of society. And of course, we can make as many efforts to fundraise for projects that these amazing young Papuans need to do to strengthen their capacity for movement-building into their futures. As allies and supporters, I hope that is a promise that we can at least work to keep, while these courageous activists continue their inter-generational struggle against all odds, for the right to be free, independent and sovereign in their own nation.

**"Nobody wants to fund projects on West Papua," the facilitator said.**

**"They don't mind Indonesia human rights stuff... but West Papua... no money..." she said.**



# In/visible.

Luisa Tora

I've been asked to discuss why the visibility of the Pacific lesbian community is important to me, and why I think this community is invisible.

I've also been invited to speak about an exhibition that I am co-curating of emerging artists who identify as lesbian, bisexual, and queer. I feel it's important to include the brief given me as I believe that sometimes questions inform us as much as the answers we receive. This is not in way intended to shame the person who asked me the questions. I appreciate this opportunity to unpack some of the themes and issues surrounding Pacific lesbian visibility.

I'd like to start the talanoa by placing some limitations on the discussion. Not to censor the talanoa so much as to sharpen its focus. I can only speak to my experience as 42-year old Fijian woman who has lived in Aotearoa for the last seven years.

I came out when I was a precocious 17 years old Foundation student at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. Even though I dived headfirst into my new lifestyle with my newly acquired girlfriend, I didn't come out to my parents until almost two years later.

It was my Mum who coaxed it out of me saying that she and Dad would love me whatever my sexuality was.

My then girlfriend lived with us and our families were friends. Three decades later I can't remember why 17 year old me didn't just tell my parents. Perhaps I was afraid. Perhaps I thought it was obvious. Perhaps I thought it wasn't anybody's business. Perhaps I was just a self-centred 17 year old and it didn't occur to me that I had to 'come out' to anyone.

Whatever the reason, I was out and my family and friends totally ran with it.

My parents have invited scores of queer friends into our family home and their hearts. I've spoken on occasion about having a gay army in Fiji. We're everywhere. I didn't really think about it until I came to Aotearoa and had to start from scratch.

(My sister and I were heartened to see these same people at both my parent's funerals.) When my sister came out, they invited her girlfriend(s) and friends home.

I remember my parents and I going to a girlfriend's home once for a party. Mum told me later that she and Dad had a heart-to-heart with my girlfriend's parents about their only daughter's sexuality. She told them "You either love her as she is or you will lose her. It's your choice."

I remember going to a drag night with a girlfriend and my Dad another time. My usually stoic father (unless you got to know him) told a homophobic heckler, “We’re here to enjoy ourselves. If you don’t like it you can leave.”

Mum would introduce me and my girlfriend to new people - This is my daughter, and this is her partner - and embarrass us no end.

My extended families on Mum and Dad's sides also embraced mine and my sister's lifestyles and girlfriends. When we both started volunteering then working with non-government organisations, our extended NGO family embraced us and the LGBTQI+ issues that we championed.

## I share this brief insight

to start to answer the first question about why Pacific lesbian visibility is important to me.

My sister and I were blessed with a supportive family, social, and professional environment. Thanks to our parents, families, and friends, we were able to live open lives at home and to carry the confidence that comes with that grounding outside our home.

However, that sentence is not accompanied by a video clip of goat kids frolicking in a sun-splashed meadow as birds chirp in the sky as we eat mangoes and cast beatific smiles at people walking by.

There've been some horrific break-ups and broken hearts, and girlfriends' families haven't always receptive to the idea of having a daughter-in-law instead of a son-in-law.

Friends have been bashed and raped by male family members to remind them of their 'place' as women. Gay male and transgender friends and acquaintances have been murdered by homophobes.

We've had to defend our constitutionally protected LGBTQI+ rights in the media, before parliamentary committees, in the international arena against an array of adroit Fiji governments playing political football.

We've been kicked off and excluded from national HIV committees and called dissidents. All of this happened between and during cyclones, coup d'états, and so many poetry readings.

All the reasons above and more are why the visibility of the Pacific lesbian community is important to me.

The love you find in relationships with lovers and family, the support and laughter and shoulders to cry on and lean on that comes from your community and those who support you, the role models and crushes that we make for those who are closeted or curious to pass on the street or read about in the newspaper, the good, the bad and the ugly poetry we write and inspire, just so you can say 'cheers queers!' at a party, not having to explain why you like girls or why you only like girls who wear fades and cable knit sweaters or girls who wear glasses and can't look you in the eye, being able to speak about your own culture to someone 'like you' in your own language or bits of your own language, seeing someone from your own culture at a lesbian party even if you spend the rest of the night avoiding each other, because it's nice knowing you aren't literally the only gay in the village.

I think about why lesbian Pacific Islanders aren't more visible around Auckland.

**She told them**

***"You either love her as she is or you will lose her. It's your choice."***

I'm not the most social person, but I try to be conscious of the people around me when I am outside. Also, I live in South Auckland so the chances of me seeing Pacific anything is much higher in my neighbourhood.

But still, we are few and far between. Or we are really good at blending in?

## Which begs the question: what does a Pacific lesbian look like anyway?

I once read a paper about migrant lesbians who live with their families in the diaspora and how their sexuality is subverted by their dependence on their families for family, immigration, financial, and language support.

Many women either decided to conceal their sexuality or did so under threat of being ostracised or being sent 'home' if they didn't conform to heterosexual norms.

The struggle is real for ethnic minorities who are also sexual minorities living in the diaspora.

This in a small way brings me back to the question or the framing of this conversation. My experience aside for now, is it necessary for people to come out or to be visible? Is the lesbian experience enough? Do we need to be visibly and audibly lesbian? I am intrigued and a little disturbed by pressure from some LGBTQI+ circles for people to 'come out' as well as shaming people who don't or can't come out and therefore live life on the DL.

## If some of us are happy to stick our necks out, does this somehow make up for those who draw theirs into their shells?

Which brings me to the exhibition I've developed with Molly Rangiwai-McHale and Ana Te Whaiti featuring artists Tasi Su'a, Jamie Berry, Sangeeta Singh, Emma Kotsapas, and Kerrie-Anne Van Heerden.

The exhibition statement states: "When Can I See You Again?" offers a public invitation into a private, contemplative space. This multimedia, multicultural, and multi-regional exhibition of emerging artists explores female sexualities, desire, power, and safe spaces.

This collectively curated gathering is an attempt to build what bell hooks calls "a community of resistance". A "central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives" (206).

Women's voices and bodies are privileged and amplified in new works created by Ana Te Whaiti, Emma Kotsapas, Jamie Berry, Kerrie Van Heerden, Luisa Tora, Molly Rangiwai-McHale, Sangeeta Singh, and Tasi Su'a. 'When Can I See You Again?' is strategically aligned with Auckland Pride Festival 2017.

'Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness' from *Yearnings: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Routledge, 1989)."

To bring it back to the talanoa before, another aim of this show is to 'build our own archive' as discussed by Dr Teresia Teaiwa. If you are missing from the narrative, write your own then share it with others. If you are missing from the landscape, insert yourself into it. I am reminded of a young woman I met once when I was neck-deep in the LGBTQI+ lobby in Fiji.

She quietly introduced herself and told me that she'd read an interview I'd done in the local media. She said it was the first time she'd seen the word lesbian discussed in a positive way in the newspaper. We hope that this show will provoke some interesting dialogue about all things lesbians.

I would be happy if a quietly lesbian woman of any ethnic descent inputted gay woman/lesbian/queer/LGBTQI in Aotearoa/New Zealand into a search engine and quickly pressed enter – and then she found us. Kia kaha!

# Demonstration

Content warning: Rape topic

Author: Tusiata Avia.

From the book Fale Aitu |Spirit House

**The thing is**  
even after all these years  
even after all you know  
after all the times you have visited

classrooms , divided them into four  
pointed to one quarter and said:  
All you people have been sexually abused

to get the message across.  
And then listened to them unbutton their stories  
shame and anger lighting them up

firing the night inside them  
the blackness all around  
a thousand bright bombs falling from the sky.

**The thing is**

after speaking through the mouths of every kind  
of good girl  
girl child

bad girl  
slut.

After reading

and talking and posting  
the drain out of it  
and then have it tunnel

back up through you  
as big as an earthquake  
only to disappear again.

Even after marching  
at the anti-rape demonstration today  
with your six-year-old daughter's hand in yours

and a sign pinned to her chest:  
Believe Survivors  
even now, as you stand here in the Square

you wonder

because it was twenty-five years ago  
and you did kind of like him  
even though he was a bit of a Fob.

**You wonder**

because it was the Samoan Students' Association  
so'otaga  
and you were the president the year before  
the first woman, the first New Zealand-born, the first  
afa kasi

and it was in your home town  
and you helped him find a place to stay  
you picked him up from the airport

it made you feel helpful  
and kind and involved  
and you did kind of like him.

**You wonder**

because after one of the asosi parties  
you were a bit drunk and ended up sleeping  
in the lounge of the house he was staying in

and kind of hoping something might happen  
in the same way you would hold a tiny, fragile  
creature  
in your loosely caged hands

maybe a butterfly or a baby mouse  
and offer that delicate thing up  
to him and hope he might

ease it gently from you  
so as not to hurt it  
and maybe offer something back.

**Because of that**

you let him kiss you  
on the floor  
before it turned

from a hopeful kiss with a guy  
you kind of liked  
to him on top of you

and you saying  
No, stop it!  
Because he'd stopped kissing you now

and even though he was shorter than you  
he was a hell of a lot stronger than you could've imagined  
and was prying you apart.

You wonder

because when you realised what was happening  
you knew you didn't want that  
and you told him, I don't want this. Stop!

But the thing is

he didn't stop  
he just kept going  
he didn't say anything

and you swore at him  
Fucking get off me!  
I don't want this

I don't want this  
you said  
I don't want this.

But he just kept going  
and didn't say anything at all  
until he was finished

when he rolled off you and said  
It's no big deal.  
That's all he said.

And you wonder

now, in the Square  
if you could've fought harder  
or not slept in the lounge

or not let him kiss you  
or not kind of liked him  
or not hoped he might like you too.

And you remember

that the next morning  
when you got to your mother's place  
you looked at yourself in the hall mirror and thought

I've just been raped.  
And then you had a shower  
and changed into your church clothes

and went to the church service with everyone else  
and he was there.  
And when you returned to teachers' college in  
Auckland

you couldn't function  
you kept seeing him in the cafeteria  
and everywhere

and you kept cracking up  
and missing classes  
and when you finally went to the counsellor

and talked about it  
she said, Have you heard yourself?  
You keep saying

It's no big deal.

So, today  
twenty-five years later  
as you watch this young woman

in the Square  
the age you were then  
take her clothes off in protest

you wonder again  
whether it was rape  
and whether it might have been your fault

IT WAS NOT MY FAULT IT WAS RAPE IT WAS NOT MY FAULT IT  
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# Pacific Panthers and International Solidarity



Fightback sat down with educator and Pacific Panther, Teanau Tuiono to discuss his experiences, and lessons, as a political activist.

## How has your whakapapa factored into your political work?

I had a bicultural upbringing. On the one hand I'm a first generation pacific islander in Aotearoa: my family migrated here from the islands for work and educational opportunities. I am also tangata whenua from Ngāi Takato and Ngāpuhi with connections throughout the Tai Tokerau including Ngati Hine.

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Within our own communities we are the norm. We have our languages and our cultures. But I am acutely aware that I am from two minorities. So I'm quite used to comparing the differences and similarities between the two cultural groups that I come from. Moving between them is something I've done my whole life. People who are both Pasifika and Māori will know what I am talking about. Navigating how you interact with the majority culture is something that you must learn as a minority. My grandfather would tell me stories about when he first came to NZ, and how tricky it was because he could not speak English well.

Sometimes when you are a minority you try and find the corners and the cracks to hide. It's the whole idea of the Other, something Edward Said talks about. Othering in colonialism is habitual between marginalised peoples and colonisers. The Other is seen as inferior and in need of "educating or saving". Colonisation seen through that lens is benign, as opposed to being incredibly violent to indigenous peoples. This is something that Gramsci also touches on when he talked about cultural hegemony.

## What have you learnt from the experience of the Polynesian Panthers, and what is new about this project? Tell us about the Pacific Panthers.

The Polynesian Panthers are an inspiration, particularly for us NZ Born Pacific Islanders. Staunch Islanders with leathers and afros - standing up for our communities. I fucken love that shit. Their political activism, running of food co-ops and homework centres, advocating for tenants and promoting Pacific languages are things to continue to aspire too.

I was a kid during the Springbok tour protests of 1981 and I lived in the inner city Auckland. The Polynesian Panthers were active in those protests in the patu squad challenging both the racism of the apartheid regime of south africa and the racist NZ muldoon government.

In those days the inner city suburbs like Grey Lynn and Ponsonby was full of immigrants and minorities; it was alive and bustling with diversity. These days it has gone completely to the dogs and is full of rich white yuppies sipping on \$20 lattes. The Pacific Panthers came out of a fono we had out of Palmerston North it was to learn about the past struggles and look at how we can move at Pacific peoples in our activism.

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**The Polynesian Panthers drew inspiration from the Black Panthers in the US. How do you think the interface works between international inspiration and local adaptation?**

I can't speak for the Polynesian Panthers and I was a child during that time period. I imagine that they saw themselves in that struggle. Poor brown kids getting kicked around by the government - much as it is here.

For myself most of my activism has come from meeting the people themselves either while travelling or being with them in their homelands and learning from them directly. I guess you can learn a lot of this stuff from books but you can't pick up every nuance, the smell and feel of a place or the hospitality of people if you go there and meet them.

The interface then is when you see yourself in each other's struggles - not the appropriation of other people's struggles - because that's just going to piss someone off sooner or later, but rather a genuine recognition of mutual solidarity and respect.

**You are a climate change activist. What is the intersection of ecological violence and colonial violence in the Pacific?**

I don't think there is an intersection as such - it's the same bunch of wankers really. People may remember news headlines from last year that focused attention on Ioane Teitiota, a self-identified climate change refugee. Teitiota was imprisoned in Aotearoa, where he had sought refugee status after fleeing his home on Kiribati.

As a part of the Cook Islands diaspora living in Aotearoa I am acutely aware that the borders separating the Cook Islands from Kiribati are a part of New Zealand's colonial history in the region. Teitiota's ability to stay or not stay in the country is dependent upon who drew the colonial borders around our Pacific nations. The government ultimately deported Teitiota back to Kiribati.

The question of movement of peoples is also a question of decolonisation. Our assertion of our whakapapa (that is our connections with each other) and the need to dismantle the borders and barriers that separate us. We need to understand why those colonial lines have been drawn and at the same time erase them.